

**Irish Omnichannel Retailers Response to changing customer
Behaviour, Preference, concerns and Experience of Irish
Customer**

Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
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28th August 2020

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I certify that the dissertation entitled: Irish Omnichannel Retailers Response to changing customer Behaviour, Preference, concerns and Experience of Irish Customer

submitted for the degree of: **MSc in International procurement and supply chain management** is the result of the my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.



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Abstract

Irish Omnichannel Retailers Response to changing customer Behaviour, Preference, concerns and Experience of Irish Customer

Gurtej Singh Randhawa

This research highlights the key step taken by the Irish Omnichannel retailers to address the current change in overall Irish Customer. The study mainly focuses on responses by the Irish omnichannel retailers on five major customer categories- Customer behaviour, Customer preference, Customer concerns and overall Customer experience. To make sure that the data collected for this research is comparable and could be analysis the researcher has made sure of two things. First, all the research subjects are serving the same customer base. For this study researcher has chosen large-scale omnichannel grocers based in Dublin as the research subject and second thematic analysis is used to analyse and code the gather data. Findings and the conclusion of this research shine the light on the fact that Omnichannel retailers responded to the change in each customer element with action steps tailor-specific to the element. For instant Omnichannel retailer responded to the change in customer behaviour with steps like providing safe atmosphere to the customer to shop in whereas they the shift of preference to online shopping with launching their own digital applications.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The research will examine the action steps undertaken by the large-scale Irish Omnichannel retailer to respond to the recent change in end-customer behavior, preferences, concerns, and experience. Semi-structure Interviews with industry experts will be undertaken to learn what precise steps have been taken by existing large-scale Irish Omnichannel retailers and clarify the critical explanation behind these steps.

1.3 Research purpose

The purpose of the study is to know the exact steps that the present Omnichannel retailers are planning to take or have taken to influence the end customer's Behavior, preferences, concerns, and experience.

the researcher wants to study these steps by omnichannel retailer mainly due to two critical reasons-

- Firstly, the researcher wants to investigate and better understand the current functioning of the latest retailing model (Omnichannel) in the modern-day Irish retailing world and contribute to its overall literature.
- Secondly, the researcher is very keen to know how Omnichannel retailers can create a loyal customer base and satisfy this base need under the Irish retail market's current uncertain condition and while a change is happening in overall Irish customer's Behavior, preferences, concerns, and experience.

1.4 Justification and Significance of the study

By Exploring Omnichannel retailers based in Ireland and the ways they are responding to evolving customer's Behavior, preferences, concerns, and experience. The research can significantly help the retail companies around the world especially the retail companies that consider Ireland as an important marketplace and trade in everyday essential items like groceries.

Although research is limited to large-scale Omnichannel grocers having a branch or headquarters in Dublin city or its outskirts. The key findings of this research can be used as a source of secondary data when an Irish grocery retailing company decides to adapt omnichannel retailing model. As, research's finding showcases how existing Irish grocers are satisfying their current customers and building a loyal customer base.

The research finding could also help global Omnichannel grocers who planning to enter Ireland's marketplace. As, the research covers what steps taken by their domestic competitor to fulfill needs of local Irish people.

1.5 Research Objective

the main objective of this research as mentioned earlier is to find how existing Omnichannel retailers in Ireland influence Customer Behavior, preferences, concerns, and experience to maintain and satisfy a loyal end customer base in the transitioning Irish retail environment.

To achieve the objective mentioned above. The researcher proposes the following questions -

- How are Irish Omnichannel Retailers responding to emerging customer Behaviors and satisfying them?

- What steps have present large Omnichannel Retailers taken to fulfill new customer's preferences in recent times?
- How can Irish Omnichannel Retailers maintain a loyal customer base when the concern towards health and sustainable products is among the modern-day Irish customer?
- What fundamental changes can Omnichannel retailers make in their supply chain to provide their customers with a seamless customer experience?

1.6 Dissertation Structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters, each related to the study objective and the research process. The first chapter describes the overall research, sets out the study's objectives and purpose, and details the significance of the research for Omnichannel food retailers worldwide.

The second chapter offers a literature review of the history of digital retail (multi-channel and omnichannel retail), customer-focused elements, namely consumer behavior, customer preferences, customer concerns, and customer experience. The second chapter also provides a brief overview of the Irish consumer and recent developments seen in them by industrial experts.

Chapter three presents the overall research methodology and research design that guides this research and other concepts such as research philosophy, research strategy, method, data collection process, and data analysis.

The Findings and Discussion chapter addresses study findings in tabulation format with a detailed description of each finding. This

chapter also shows how the research findings are relevant to the overall research objectives of this study.

The final chapter discusses the study's influence, drawbacks faced by the researcher, and conclusions to overall research findings. It also shines the light on forward-looking recommendations and suggestions for future research work.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of the Literature

The literature review's main objective is to acknowledge and assess previous research work done by various professionals relating to the research objective of this research, in order to create a conceptual framework for this exploratory study.

The literature is carefully collected from various reliable sources like Open Databases- (EBSCO, ProQuest and SACE), E-books- (Marketing 4.0), E-Magazine- (Harvard Business Review and MIT SLOAN management review) and E-reports- (Pwc.ie report). This was done to make sure that the literature on which the conceptual framework is based on is credible and reliable. The literature concludes by addressing the gap in the literature in order to get a better understanding of how Irish Omnichannel retailers will improve customer experience during this uncertain period.

The following headings outline the structure of the entire literature:

- Background of the Retail Industry in the Digital Age.
- Elements of the Consumers.
- Trends and Development in Irish Retailing
- Conceptual Framework
- Conclusion

2.2 Background of the Retail Industry in the Digital Age-

According to Schwab (2016), World Economic Forum's founder and executive chairman, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (the digital revolution) is all about blurring the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. The digital revolution completely transformed the world. Multichannel retailing and omnichannel retailing are the two main forms of retailing that originated in the fourth industrial revolution, and are evolving. These forms of retailing world are discussed in depth below-

2.2.1 The Multichannel Retailing

According to Stone, Hobbs and Khaleeli (2002) Multichannel retailing is "a distribution strategy to serve customers using more than one selling channel or medium, such as the internet, television and retail outlets." Throughout the digital age there were various researches conducted on this retailing concept

In the early stages of digital revolution, Researchers were keen to find how this new Disruption (namely, Internet) would change the rules of the game for the traditional retailer. There was researches conducted to see whether a conventional retailer should add online channels to their existing channel mix or not. Geyskens, Gielens and Dekimpe (2002) research demonstrated the effect of introducing an Internet platform to a company's market returns using the event-study methodology.

Consumer purchasing habits shifted when time went by, leading to a shift in direction in the retail industry for Multichannel retailers. Many retailers now concentrate on how their consumers could be handled through a multichannel marketing strategy. This period's researcher saw this new trend and began to think about the retailers' prospects and risks when handling the consumer through a multichannel approach. (Neslin et al., 2006) research article identifies five critical challenges that every multichannel retailer must address in order to manage their environment. They also developed a framework in their article

that describes different linkages among the challenges discovered and serves as a way to visualize multichannel customer management.

In the following years, retailers started to rely on a multichannel approach more and considered Multichannel shoppers to be more profitable than the single-channel shopper. The researchers also turn their focus on Multichannel shoppers. According to Weinberg, Parise and Guinan (2007) Multichannel shoppers are "defined as those who utilize a variety of different purchasing channels, including bricks-and-mortar stores, the telephone, and the Internet."

Venkatesan, Kumar and Ravishanker (2007) Research on Multichannel shoppers explore, first, the effect of multichannel shopping on consumer profitability and, second, the framework for evaluating the effects of customer-firm interactions on channel duration. The study authors have developed a prototype model for empirical testing of the proposed framework.

Besides above mention researches, there were various other research studies undertook by other researchers on the subject of channel migration (Ansari, Mela and Neslin, 2008), impact of channel expansion on firms value (Homburg, Vollmayr and Hahn, 2014), and customer loyalty while keeping the Multichannel retailer at the center.

2.2.2 Omnichannel Retailing

Omnichannel retailing is about delivering improved user experience and enhancing end-customer relationships through delivery networks and points of touch. In some cases, it's a multichannel Retailing extension. Like multichannel retailers, omnichannel retailers often ensure they sell their goods through more than one channel of distribution. Rigby (2011) defines omnichannel retailing as "an integrated sales experience that melds the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping."

The early research work published by many experts concerning omnichannel retailing suggested different strategies that different types of retailers could use in the era of omnichannel retailing to make their offering more desirable by the end customer. (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013) Academic article on omnichannel

retailing discusses several short-term approaches (i.e., using big data and analytics to better understand customer needs and values) and long-term strategies (i.e., integrating channels, developing exclusive and exclusive products and designing product-service bundles) that can be used by different retailers such as Brick and Motor Shops, Dual-Channel retailers and pure online retailers to compete in the omnichannel era.

As, Omnichannel retailing is heavily dependent on digital technologies to create a seamless online and in-store experience for the end customer. Researchers were keen to immerse themselves in opportunities and challenges that digital technologies such as Mobile Commerce and RFID tags could generate for retailers in the age of omnichannel retailing. Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014) focus group research discusses a few important particular issues such as the need for channel integration, the impact of mobile technologies, finding a balance between personalization and consumer privacy.

Real time delivery and distribution network play an important role in providing the consumer with the seamless experience which is promised by omnichannel retailers. This is the key reason why Delivery is a crucial research field for Omnichannel-era researchers. Several studies have been done and many academic papers have been written on the omnichannel retailing delivery process. (Hübner, Holzapfel and Kuhn, 2016), (Fisher, Gallino and Xu, 2019) and, (Dimitrova, 2019) are some of the latest research that focuses on Distribution system and Rapid Delivery.

Customers have always been a vital retailer stakeholder because any transition a retailer undergoes is essentially delighting the end consumer of the product. And every time the retail industry changes, retailers come up with a new retail model to adapt to that retail climate. Researchers and retail experts are keen to find out how consumer responses effect omnichannel retailers' distinct areas / aspects. Ovezmyradov and Kurata (2019) research work on customer response presents a model on active customer response to stockout of popular appraisal products.

2.3 Elements of the Consumers

This section will address the core elements of end customers that are changing rapidly in the digitalization era and that modern retailers need to adapt to in order to retain a loyal and satisfied customer base.

2.3.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is the decision process and physical activity, which individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using or disposing of goods and services' (Block and Roering, 1979). According to American Marketing Association (2020) "Consumer behavior refers to the study of how customers, both individual and organizations, satisfy their needs and wants by choosing, purchasing, using and disposing of goods, ideas and services."

Many experts have always considered consumer behavior as one of the most critical areas as it has the most direct impact on the entire retail industry.

In the past, several retailing experts and marketing professionals have conducted researches into customer behavior and its different facets. Some are listed here. Sousa and Voss (2012) study look at how e-service efficiency affects consumer behaviour, Kaur and Devgan (2014) dig deep into Indian appraisal store in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities with a customer behaviour and (Wang et al., 2012) research article explores emotional display and personal sales, and their effect on consumer behaviour.

Owing to the global pandemic and the collapse of various markets, consumer behavior around the world has totally changed in the year 2020. Portioners and researchers in the retailing industry have acknowledged this transition as early as possible and have begun publishing their results in the form of virtual papers and e-books. Few of these works are mention here-

Evan and Rivera (2020) Article sheds light on a common issue faced by "data deficit" retailers all over the world. They also suggest some of the counter measures that retailers can take to reduce this data deficit 's effect. (Yoon, 2020) Article discusses three behavioural patterns that affect different industries

around the world, namely (work from home, Dinner for one and Don't be dense).

2.3.2 Customer Preferences

There is no definite definition for customer preferences as they differ from person to person. As per, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2020) preference is "a greater interest in or desire for somebody/something than somebody/something else". Taking guidance from this general definition one can describe, consumer preferences as desire for or interest shown by the end customer to buy a product or service. It plays a very crucial role in individual consumer buying decision processes and, therefore, many retailing professionals are considering it to be the second most important. They are also known as consumer choices, desires or options.

Several retail and marketing professionals have conducted studies that focuses on customer preferences and its varied facets. Govers and Schoormans (2005) academic work looks into product personality influence on consumer preferences, Bhardwaj (2019) study tries to understand customer preference for sustainable package design. Scholz, Meissner and Decker (2010) research article measures preferences of customers regarding complex products.

Customer Preferences have drastically changed in the year 2020 due to factors like COVID-19, Government stay-at-home orders and growing anxiety among the end customers. There are various business magazines, industrial reports and articles identifying these changing preferences. According to Resil Das (2020) customer are preferring to spend more on essential goods and shopping with online or omnichannel retailers.

2.3. 3 Consumer Health safety and sustainable Concerns

Concern is usually something that worries or causes one anxiety. Different researches have been published over the years and are carried out by specialists and experts from various fields, namely (social science, retail, industry, and many more) to understand various concerns. Katz and Davison

(2014) study explore concerns related to mental health by comparing community college and traditional college students. Xue et al. (2020) Article analysis how financial literacy help elderly citizen decide on financial strategy that will mitigate financial concerns.

In recent years, Sustainable Development, Environment protection, environmentally friendly products and a healthy lifestyle are some specific concerns which are gaining support from people around the world. United Nations also took notice of this trend and has recently changed its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to support this sustainability and global health initiative (see figure 1 to have a look at all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals).

Figure 1- sustainable goals



Sources-(Sustainable Development Goals, no date)

The United Nation development program, a United Nation global development network, published in its 2019 Annual report to display major millstones which the system was able to deliver to support global sustainability and health initiative. The reported stated that the network was able to achieve following milestones-

- One hundred ten countries joined UNDP's Climate promise.
- It partnered with 103 countries to support sustainable development goals.

- Seventeen million people have better access to essential services
UNDP Annual Report (2019).

The recent articles published by various researchers and marketing professionals are focusing on health and safety of both customers and employees. Shumsky and Debo (2020) digital article describes three key steps or principles which different retailers can easily implement in their bottom line or stores to create a safe environment for both customers and employees. Pentland (2020) paper discusses steps which businesses in general can take to provide a safe working environment to their workforce when economies around the world start to re-open.

2.3.4 Customer Experience

According to Shaw and Ivens (2002) "Customer experience is a blend of a company's physical performance and the emotion evoked, intuitively measured against customer expectation across all movements of contact." Customer experience is sometimes also called shopping experience or end-user experience.

Customer experience is an age-old concept which has gain importance over the years. In recent time has become one of the critical areas which demands everyone attention. Usually researchers' researches customer experience with overall customer journey.

During this age of increasingly dynamic customer actions the Lemon and Verhoef (2016) seek to build a better understanding of customer experience and customer journey. They discuss existing concepts and construct conceptual frameworks for customer experience to accomplish their objective. They also offer a critical background on the origins of customer experience within marketing.

Siebert et al., (2020) Article examine the customer experience journey through loyalty loops and Involvement spirals. The article compares customer journey through both loyalty loops and involvement spirals. It specifies what companies can do to maximize positive customer experience. The article concludes with generating new-journey centred query for customer experience management.

In modern times as technology is moving at a rapid pace and impacting numerous industries around the world. Retail Analyst has also started to view customer experience through technological advancement viewpoint to find solutions for questions like how can new technologies help retailers around the world enhance overall customer experience, what challenges companies can face will installing advance technology to cater desirable customer experience. Bernoff (2019) article looks into four key hurdles that the overall organization has to overcome in order to make their customer experience driven by artificial intelligences. Morgan (2017) article discusses how artificial intelligences could help organizations around the world to remove data clutter which would help organization to gain resourceful data to maximize customer experience.

Few other research works keeping customer experience at its core are mentioned below-

Bleier, Harmeling and Palmatier (2019) research work dive deep into online customer experience and tries to analysis how unique design elements shapes four different aspect of online customer overall experience.

Batra (2019) research paper aims to document the emerging trends and challenges of customer experience, the nature of customer experience, management issues related to customer experience, and a variety of approaches and analytical techniques used to analyze customer experience as a whole.

2.4 Irish Customer

Keeping different key elements of the customers mentioned in the above sub-section mind. This segment will look mainly at Irish consumers and will seek to identify few retail developments that have arisen in Ireland due to COVID-19, global lockdown, trade wars, conscience-cooked consumers, Brexits and global political uncertainties.

2.4.1 Trends and New developments in Irish Retailing

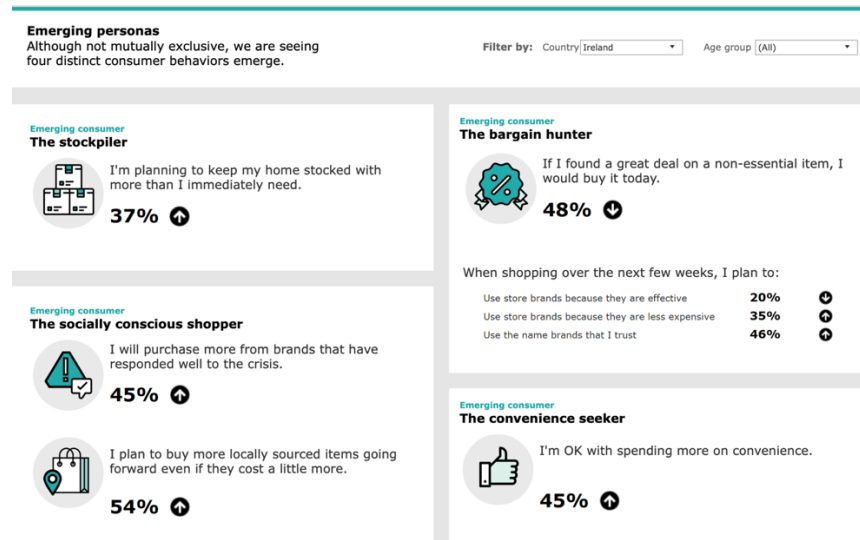
This sub-section uses various industrial reports and statistical tools to look into different trends and developments that are currently emerging or have emerged in the retailing world of Ireland.

2.4.1.1 Emerging New Consumer Behaviors-

Customer conduct/ Consumer Behavior has a strong effect on the purchasing decision of the consumer. It must therefore be closely controlled during unpredictable times.

Deloitte, one of the Big Four Accounting Firms, has done just that. The organization started observing rise of four new forms of consumer behaviors around the world and in Ireland, namely, the stockpiler, the bargain hunter, the socially conscious customer and the convenience seeker.

Figure 2- Emerging customer Behaviors in Ireland



Source- Consumer behavior trends state of the consumer tracker | Deloitte Insights (2020)

The image in Figure 2 shows whether a customer behavior from emerging customer behaviors is rising or falling among Irish customers of all ages. It also displays the percentage by which behavior is spiraling down or shooting high for the convenience of the user.

According to the figure, both The Convenience seeker and sub-category 1 (customer who will buy from brands that responded well during crises) of Socially concern shoppers are rising by 45%. The Stockpiler and sub-category 2 (customer who prefer to buy locally sourced products even it cost a little more.) of Socially concern shopper behavior are also on a growth path by percentages falling in the bracket of 30%-60% respectively.

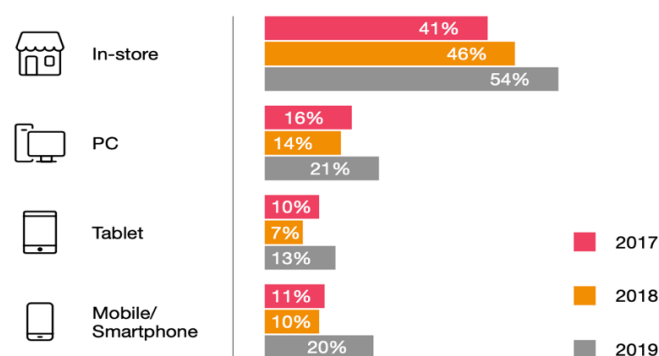
The Illustration in figure 2 is also depicting that from the four-emerging customer behaviors. The Bargain hunter behavior is dropping by 48% Consumer behavior trends state of the consumer tracker | Deloitte Insights (2020).

2.4.1.2 Increasing Consumer preference towards in-store shopping and m-commerce

In recent times Irish customer has shown that they increasingly prefer to do shopping both in-store and through the internet. Both of these concepts are discussed in detail in this sub-section

- More Importance given to in-store shopping

Figure 3 – (preferred Buying Channel)



Source-(PWC Irish Retail and Consumer Report, 2019)

The bar chart of Figure 3 – (preferred Buying Channel) depicts that for three consecutive years (2017, 2018 and 2019), in-store shopping has been the number one preferred way/mode of shopping for the Irish customers compared with a personal computer (pc), tablet and smartphones. It has seen a growth near to 50% approx. [2017 (41%), 2018 (46%) and 2019 (54%)] every year.

The chart all shines the light on the fact that preference for personal computer (pc), tablets and smartphones as a channel of shopping has doubled even though they seem to have grown in small portion when compared to the in-store shopping channel.

This trend of in-store shopping has seen a sudden drop in the First Quarter of the year 2020 because of the sudden Lockdown announced by the Irish government. However, as the Government of Ireland plans to reopen the main street and uplift the lockdown.

Deloitte consumer tracker reported that as on 30th May 2020 (56%) of the total Irish population felt safe to go to a physical store for shopping Consumer behavior trends state of the consumer tracker | Deloitte Insights (2020).

- Rise of M-commerce and online shopping in Ireland

Impact of COVID-19 on ICT Usage by Households - CSO - Central Statistics Office (2020) Reveals that the number household using mobile handset and internet to perform daily task like receiving health advice, educating themselves and grocery shopping has increased by the end of first quarter (2020) due global pandemic. According to the report during the lockdown period survey conducted by central statistics office, showed that 16% of the Irish population were buying furniture, home accessories, or gardening products online in March 2020 compare to 10% in January. The survey also showcased that more and more end-customers are preferring to buy groceries from online retailers as statics tells percentage of people ordering groceries has reached 13% from 6% in January.

Look into the illustration in figure 4 -

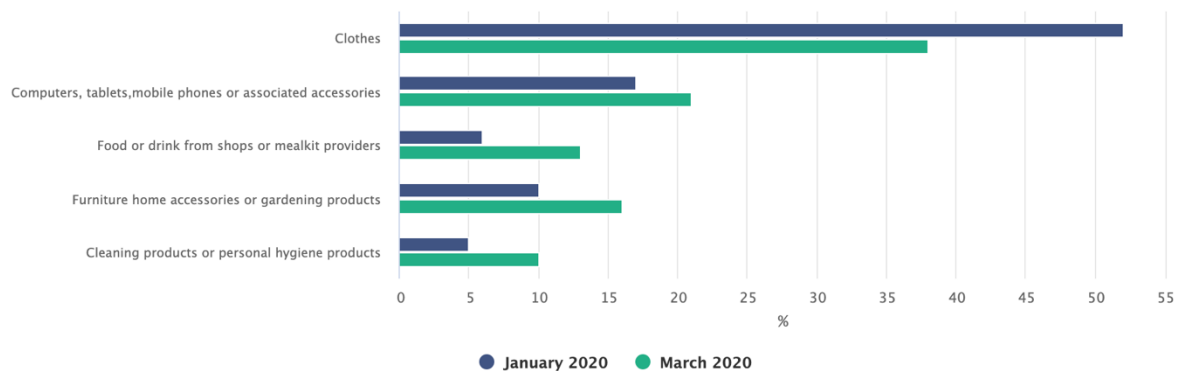
Figure 4- Internet changing the Irish customer



Source-(*Impact of COVID-19 on ICT Usage by Households - CSO - Central Statistics Office, 2020*)

Figure 5- Different types purchases done by Irish customer through online channels

(January to March 2020)



Source-*(Internet Purchases - CSO - Central Statistics Office, 2020)*

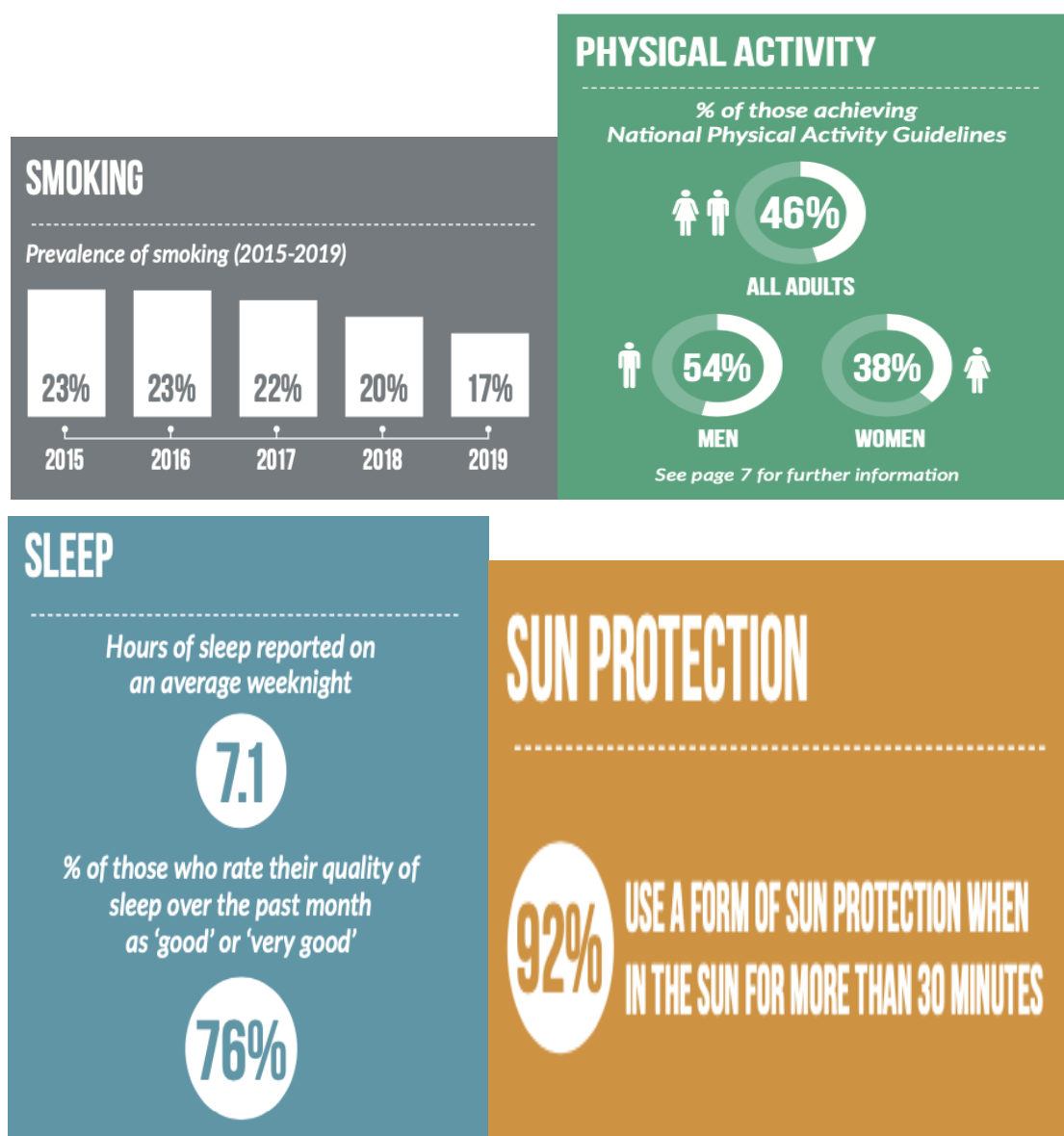
From the bar graph in figure 5, it can be clearly seen that sale of essential goods have grown exponentially. Especially the sale of personal hygiene products and food or drink or meal kit products. Both products categories sales grew by approximately 100% or doubled. The main reason behind this exponential growth might be coronavirus hitting Ireland in mid- march and the Irish government introduced emergency measures like, announcing nation-wide lockdown, closing non-essential retail outlets and introducing Social distancing measures in shops providing essential services. Such as limiting the number of persons in shops, customers should wear safety kit while shopping.

2.4.1.3 Increasing health and local product concern among all customer groups

- Growing Health concerns among the end-customers of Ireland-

Researcher researching into the Irish retail industry and Irish end consumers knows that health has become one of the top priorities of a consumer living in Ireland in recent times, which any Irish retailer has to fulfill. According to Healthy Ireland summary report (2019) People living in Ireland have become more concern about their individual health. key finding of the report can be seen in figure 6.

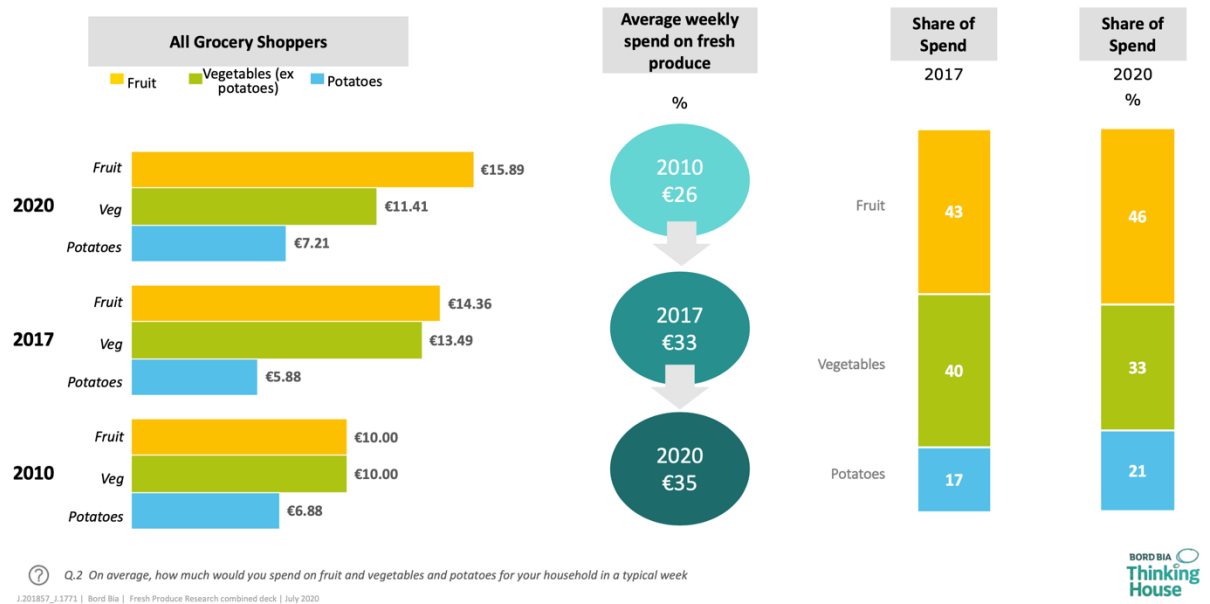
Figure 6- Irish people focusing on health



Source- (Healthy Ireland summary report 2019)

Figure 7- Average spend on fresh product by Irish people

Base: All Participants - 1029




Source-(fresh-produce-report-july2020)

According to fresh-produce-report (2020) by Bord Bia average weekly spending on fresh food by Irish customer has increased in the current year. The report states that in the year 2020 the average weekly spend on fruits stands at 15.89 euro per week, vegetable at 11.41 euro and potatoes at 7.21 euro. The report also states that the overall weekly spend on fresh produce has increased by 5% when compared with average weekly spend on fresh produce in 2017. The detail average weekly spending on fresh produce is given in figure 7.

- Concerns of Irish end-customers towards sustainability and local products-

Figure 8- Key drivers for Irish Customers to by local Products

| What are your main reasons for purchasing Irish products? | | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|------|------|
|  | Buying Irish has a positive effect on the Irish economy | 62% | 67% |
|  | Quality of the product as it is locally produced | 45% | 58% |
|  | To support local retailers | 52% | 57% |
|  | Food traceability is more guaranteed as the food is local | 44% | 43% |
|  | Products are only available in Ireland | 10% | 13% |
|  | I do not purchase Irish products | 3% | 3% |

Source-(PWC Irish Retail and Consumer Report, 2019)

In recent years, the entire island of Ireland is very concern about minimizing the overall negative impact its economy is having on the entire environment. The Irish government has taken many steps to lead the entire country to a sustainable future. Various government initiative towards a green and healthy future are listed below-

- Hogan (2011) worked on "Green Tenders – Action plan on Green public procurement" which purposes various green procurement initiatives that numerous public authorities belonging to different sectors like, construction, transportation, cleaning products, and energy could take into consideration to make their procurement process eco-friendlier.
- Climate Action Plan (2019) is another initiative by Irish government to lower the country carbon footprint and create opportunities in sustainable development sector.

Many industrial reports suggest that not only the Irish government but consumers too are very concerned regarding sustainable development and purchases of local products. According to PWC Irish Retail and Consumer

Report (2019) the overall Irish customers. 41% of customers are ready to pay a premium price for sustainable products during this uncertain period. The report also reported that 68% of the Irish customer base is prepared to premium for locally produced food. The report tries to identify the key motivators behind Irish customers preference towards local products. The complete list key drivers identified by the PWC report 2019 can be seen in figure 8 of this research.

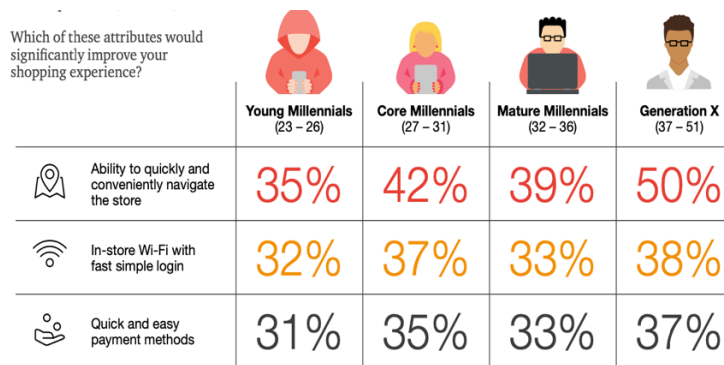
2.4.1.4 Growing Importance of Customer experience

It is important for a business to provide the end user with a smooth and friction-free experience across the different touchpoints. If it wishes to thrive in today's retail market environment, and build a very strong consumer base. Customer experience has increased in importance over the years and has become one of the main competitive indicators on which a retail business has to score very high. According to PWC Irish Retail and Consumer Report (2019) about 47% of Irish respondents expressed that they wish to navigate the store as quickly and as conveniently as possible. To further prove the importance of store experience. The report summarizes a survey conducted by PwC Ireland on which attribute among the three-

- Ability to quickly and conveniently navigate the store
- In-store Wi-Fi with fast simple login
- Quick and easy payment methods

Will enhance the shopping experience of Irish customers. Results from the survey can be seen in figure 9.

Figure 9 – Attributes to enhance customer experience



Source-(PWC Irish Retail and Consumer Report, 2019)

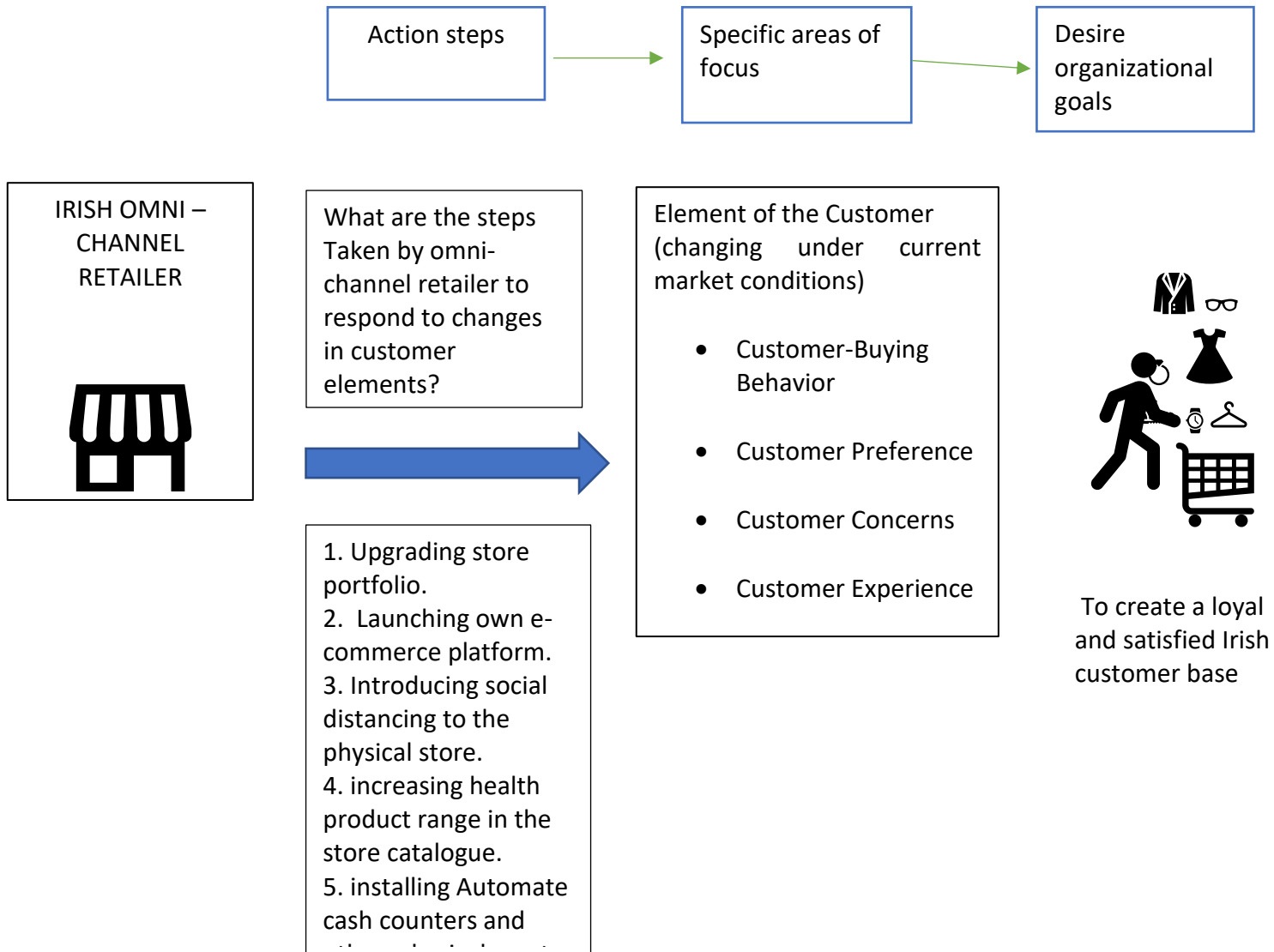
From the results displayed in figure 9. It is easy to conclude that the primary attribute which each Irish customer from all the different age expect retailers to implement in order to provide them a friction less customer experience is the ability to quickly and conveniently navigate the store. [Young Millennials (35%), Core Millennials (42%), Mature Millennial (39%) and Generation X (50%)]

As, discussed earlier advancement in technology has the potential to enhance or completely change customer experience as a whole. Many Irish Research institutes, market analysts and retail experts has already noticed this emerging trend and started researching on it.

ida_cx_transformation (2019) study/report dive deep into different competes relating to customer experience. It briefly describes the entire evolution of customer experience after which it focusses on Ireland and identify key factor to justify why Ireland has a household name when it comes to customer experience. But the main focus of this study/report is to provide a vision and steps to implement it. So, that Ireland could take advantage of opportunities presented to the nation by the current shift in customer experience. The report also determines three key forces namely, (data and technology force, strategic force, and generational forces).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 10- Conceptual framework



Source- (Created by author of the research)

After more clarification of the various facets of the research objective, the aim of the research is to integrate a summary of the literature through the development of a conceptual structure. The researcher is going to take reference from Gap Analysis Program (U.S.) and Geological Survey (U.S.) (1993) and elements of the customer from the literature review to create the framework for this study.

From the conceptual framework in Figure 10. It is evident that the study focuses on investigating the steps taken by the new omnichannel Retailers in Ireland to respond to developments in particular areas such as Customer behaviour, customer preferences, customer concerns and customer experience. So, the new Irish Omnichannel Retailers will please the Irish consumer who will help them develop a strong and happy customer base. So, that current Irish omnichannel Retailers could delight the Irish customer which will intern help them create a loyal and satisfied customer base.

The researcher set the desired goal as "building loyal customer base in Ireland" because according to Resil Das (2020) work customer disloyalty is widespread. The study says customers all over the world are now buying from multiple stores, and are not loyal to anyone. This means that any retailers capable of winning consumer confidence in the current volatile Irish market will have the edge over their rivals when the Irish markets stabilize.

The researcher has specifically chosen to study response to only four customer elements, namely Consumer Behavior, Customer preferences, Customer Concerns and Customer experience. Because researcher assume for the purpose of study that each element presents in the specific areas of focus have a huge impact on at least one critical aspect of the entire end customer journey and decision-making process.

- Consumer behavior is an analysis of customers and the mechanisms they employ to select, utilize and dispose of goods and services.
- Consumer preferences are perceptions, interests, dislikes, motives and inclinations that influence customer buying decisions. They reinforce the consumer's needs and illustrate customer actions.
- Customer concern are based on the fear of that resides in end customer. This fear might exist in customer due to some thing or someone.

- Consumer experience is the result of the engagement between the company and the Customer over the course of the interaction.

Any change in these four elements can make it very hard for the retailer in Ireland and around the world to recognise the current customer pattern, profile them and reacting to them

2.6œ Conclusion

In conclusion, Researcher found a void in literature that other researchers have not yet addressed. Specific work has been carried out on how retailers should react to each key item, namely consumer behaviour, customer preferences, customer concerns and customer experience by various researchers. But no single research work addresses how to react to all the four main elements while keeping Irish retail industry or Irish retailers at its core. By integrating and exploring the four main elements in a single study and focussing on a single retailer (Irish Omnichannel store). The researcher will fill the void in literature.

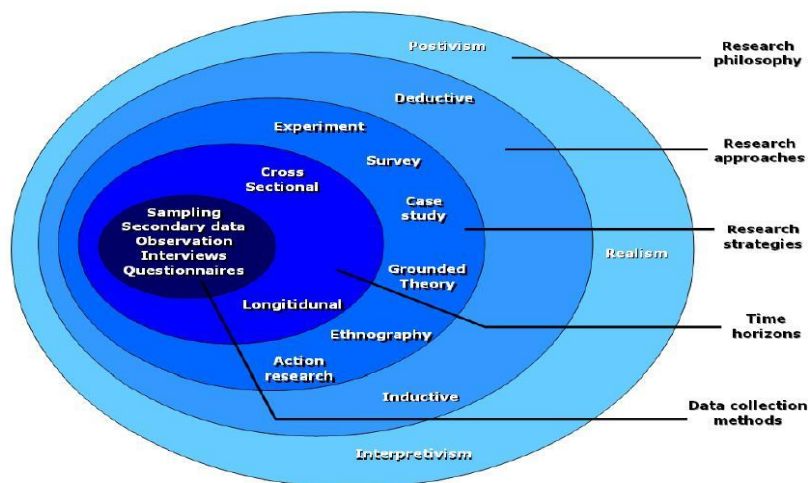
3. Methodology and Research Design

3.1 overview

The sub-sections in this section will address the overall study design and methodology, which the researcher will use to direct the entire research. This section, also looks at the research theory, research approach, research strategy, data collection approaches, and data analysis. This section will take inspiration from Saunders' Research Onion.

The figure below highlights the onion of the research.

Figure 11- Saunders' Research Onion



Source-(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007)

These are the critical research questions that the study would answer to accomplish the aims of the study.

- How are Irish Omni-channel Retailers responding to emerging customer Behaviors and satisfying them?
- What steps have present large Omni-channel Retailers taken to fulfill new customer's preferences in recent times?

- How can Irish Omni-channel Retailers maintain a loyal customer base when the concern towards health and local products are evolving among the modern-day Irish customer?
- What fundamental changes can Omni-channel retailers make in their supply chain to provide their customers with a seamless customer experience?

3.2 Research Philosophy

A research philosophy relates to the collection of beliefs regarding the essence of the fact under investigation (Bryman, 2012). Positivism and Interpretivism are the most common research philosophies used around the world for research. The philosophy of positivism is usually used to evaluate a theory or to prove a hypothesis. Lee (1991) work explains positivism as a model of natural science in his paper.

On the other hand, Interpretive philosophy practitioners rely heavily on Qualitative data and, Sensory Intelligence of a person as it explains reality by interpretations that people attribute to them.

This research investigates how Ireland's omnichannel retailers influence consumer behaviour, preferences, concerns, and experience to maintain and attract a committed customer base in the changing Irish retail environment. This Aim demonstrates explicitly that the research is Qualitative and reality-driven. It also shows that a theory or a hypothesis does not guide the study. So, Interpretive philosophy should be appropriate to guide this research.

3.3 Research Approach

To accomplish its aim, choosing a primary study method is extremely critical to any study work. The two research approaches that scholars around the world recognize and are using are deductive and inductive.

A researcher draws a hypothesis about a pre-existing theory under a deductive approach and develops a methodology for assessing it (Silverman, 2013).

Researchers are permitted to develop their theories under the inductive approach and may not draw on current theories to perform a thesis. This unique trait of the inductive methodology is generally the primary explanation that this approach is pointed to by many specialists as an approach for going from particular concepts to the general (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

In this research, an inductive approach is ideal because it does not test some current theories or hypotheses, but it aims to investigate several specific concepts to get a general impression of whole Irish retail industries.

3.4 Research Strategies

Research strategies indicate the researcher's intention of researching as a whole (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). There are different strategies from which researchers can choose one, including experimental research, case study, survey, action research, and interviews, to do the research work. Few of these strategies are laid out below-

Experimental research-

An experimental research strategy takes a small array of considerations into account. However, it can be used in any research field according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) work. Using this strategy, the researcher derives test outcomes from an experiment and compares them with pre-determined findings.

case study-

According to several research experts, case study research strategy can be used to gain insight into the fundamental nature of any case or be used to recognize and define cultural and context meaning in differences between cases (Silverman, 2013).

Survey-

The Survey technique typically complements researchers conducting quantitative analysis and comprises sampling methods (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Through this strategy, any researcher can easily collect vast quantities of data from a broad audience.

Action research-

Many educators and nursing healthcare professionals frequently employ an action research strategy to determine how to enhance their understanding and approach towards their profession (Wiles, Crow and Pain, 2011). This technique is primarily used to find the answer to a particular problem

Interviews-

The interview is a growing strategy among the researchers conducting a qualitative study as it complements these researchers' research work to obtain in-depth knowledge from the interview participants of their study. Few academic experts agree that screening subjects before questioning them in qualitative studies are of utmost importance (Davies, 2011). According to Kirby (2000) there are three types of interview-

- Structed interview- Here, interviewer present the question in exact order.
- Un Structure interview – under this interview format. Question are not pre arrange.
- Semi-Structured interview- they are a combination of both structure and un-structure interview formats.

The essential research strategy for this research paper will be the interview. Here are the explanations for this decision-

Firstly, the interview will help the researcher accomplish the defined research objectives and develop a clear understanding of key objectives through the information the participants of the interview (i.e., practitioners and experts) have.

Secondly, since research has a qualitative character and uses an inductive approach, a semi-structured, open-ended interview would make it simple and less complicated for the researcher to gather data and interpret it. This strategy will also help the researcher complete the research paper within the time constraint of three months.

3.5 Research Choices

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) work suggests that the research onion illustrates three research choices, namely, the Mono-method, the Mixed-method, and Multi-method. These research choices are explored more in-depth in this segment-

Mono-Method-

Under the Mono-method researcher utilizes only one either qualitative or quantitative methodology and does not mix them. So, researchers utilizing this option of study collect only one type of data.

Mixed Method-

According to Flick (2011) research, this research choice, builds an objective single data collection unit by combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Multi-Method-

The multi-method is equivalent to a mixed-method because it also lets researchers around the globe mix various methodologies. Flick (2011) work indicates that one uses this research choice when their research work is split into various parts, each generating a particular data collection.

A Mono-method is the most appropriate research choice for this thesis as the research focuses solely on the collection and analysis of the qualitative data. This research choice will not only help the researcher fully grasp the knowledge that is to be published in this paper. Nevertheless, also aid the researcher in completing the thesis under the three months.

3.5 Time Horizon

Time Horizon layer defines the time span during which the researcher is expected to complete the research work. According to Bryman (2012) Cross-Sectional and longitudinal are the different kinds of time zones listed in the research onion.

Cross-Sectional Time Horizon

The time frame is fixed under this time horizon and does not change. The data must be obtained within the defined time by the researcher. For brief experiments or study into a particular phenomenon at a given period, researchers may settle for the horizon of cross-sectional duration.

Longitudinal Time Horizon

Data collection is a continuous process under this time horizon that occurs over a lengthy period, and thus longitudinal time horizon is frequently used to examine a transition over time (Goddard and Melville, 2011).

For this research, the cross-sectional time horizon is preferred as this thesis attempts to capture just one phenomenon: the recent impact of Irish Omni-Channel retailers on the overall customer behaviour, preference, concerns, and experience. This time horizon is also preferred for this research because the time frame for this research is fixed (three months), and the researcher has to complete the research within this time frame.

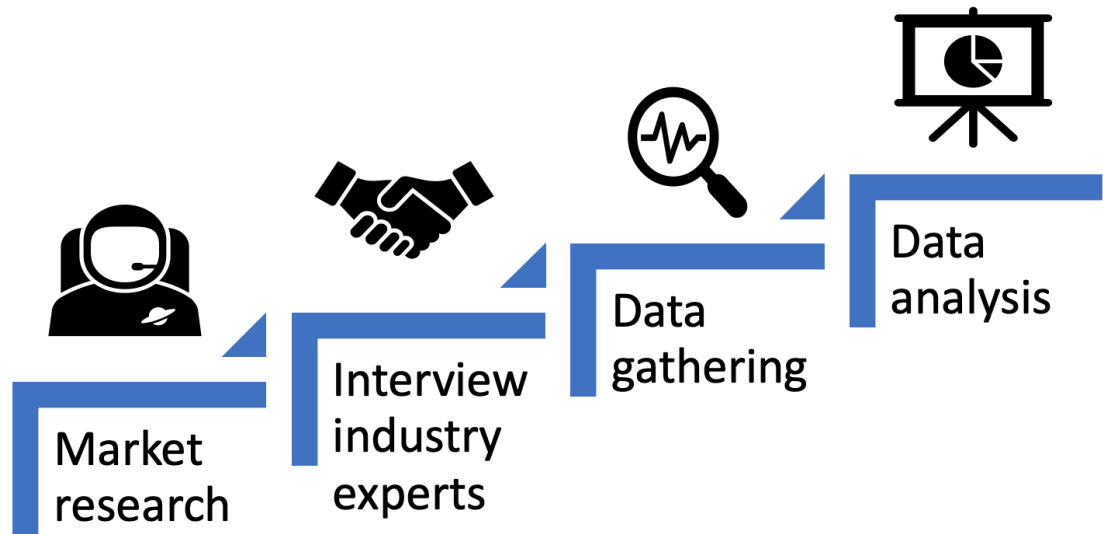
3.6 Data collection and Data analysis

3.6.1 Method of Collecting Data

Wrenn, Stevens and Loudon (2007) notes that observation and communication are the two methods of primary data collection. These experts also state that to obtain a direct response communication uses approaches such as personal interviews, telephone questionnaires, and electronic surveys. Researchers have already mentioned that interview is the primary research strategy for this thesis, so the researcher will use the communication method with the approach of personal interviews to gather primary data for this study.

To gather primary data, the researcher would adopt the data collection process outlined in the figure below-

Figure 12- Data Collection process



Source -(created by Author)

Steps of Data collection process-

Step 1 Market research:

The data collection process starts with research conducting market research to gain in-depth knowledge of the Irish retail industry.

Step 2 Interview industry experts

In this step, the Researcher interview industry experts utilizing telephone or video charting applications like zoom to gain knowledge from the opinions, beliefs, and facts stated by the participants in the interview.

Step 3 Data gathering:

Here researcher gathers the data from the interviews and converts them into transcripts to aid data analysis.

Step 4 Data analysis:

Here, the researcher will use Analysing tools like coding to make the collected data more meaningful and presentable.

3.6.1 Sources of Data

Primary Data sources

"The Data collected by the investigator from the original source are called primary data"(Singh and Mangat, 1996). For this study, the roots of primary data collection are interviews with industry experts. The researcher was able to obtain primary data from seven Retailing Experts for this study. The subjects, whom the researcher had contacted for the interview, have a history in marketing or retailing and contribute to or operate a retail company that is perceived to be one of Ireland's industry leaders. The list of participants is shown in table 1 in the finding and discussion chapter.

Secondary Data sources

"if the required data had already been collected by some agencies or individual and are now available in published or unpublished records, these are known as secondary data."(Singh and Mangat, 1996). Following are the different secondary data sources that the researcher will use in this research-

- Academic libraries (Google books, Griffith online library)
- Academic Journals (Sage journals)
- Research Databases (ESBO, Science Direct, Google scholar)
- Market research reports (PWC report, Mintel reports)
- Statistical websites (www.cso.ie)

3.6.2 Data analysis techniques

The data collected in the transcripts are analysed by the researcher using a system of coding. One needs to learn what a code is to grasp coding. According to Saldana (2012), a code is a short phrase or term that captures, aggregates, and makes the meaning visible in linguistic and visual data. Known let us understand what coding is. According to Gibbs (2008) work "coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about." To establish the steps that the researcher will use to code the transcript. The researcher is taking guidance from the qualitative coding steps specified by Adu (2019) book.

Analytical measures taken by the researcher are listed below-

Step 1: Research Analysis

According to Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) applied thematic analysis focus on empirical investigation, in which codes are combined to create themes. The researcher has selected thematic analysis to code the gathered data. As, this analyzing method will help the researcher to interpret or find connections in the gathered data.

Step 2: Assign tags to research questions

Assigning tags to research questions which will intern help the researcher to connect the research findings with research questions of this study. This step will make the findings more relevant to the study.

Step 3: Creating codes out of collected data

The researcher will use software like Microsoft Excel and word and ignore automated tools like Dedose and QDA miners to create codes from the collected data. So, that researcher can fully grasp the knowledge of coding.

Step 4: Categorization of codes and creating themes

In this step, the researcher will simply assemble the labels and codes from steps two and three. Then the researcher will create categories and themes out of these labels and codes.

Step 5: Summarizing the themes and preparing the research finding

In the final step, the researcher will simply summarize the themes and form the research findings.

3.6.3 Nature of Data

The data is qualitative by nature. The researcher ensures that the participants have some connection to an organization serving the same customer base. So, that enormous scope of understanding could be achieved with them. A sample of the Interview questions that will be used in the qualitative interview is mentioned bellow-

Q1. What changes do you observe in customer buying behavior in recent times?

Q2. What key steps are you taking to satisfy this change in behavior patterns?

Q3. What specific actions have your business taken to ensure that customer needs and preferences are satisfied in the current environment?

Q4. How is your business responding to growing customer preference towards M-commerce and Online shopping?

Q5. Do you see health concerns growing or decreasing among your targeted audience? How will you cater to this increasing/decreasing concern towards health among your audience?

Q6. According to you, to what extent do customers prefer local brands in recent times? How will you serve this above mention emerging concerns among consumers to maintain a loyal customer base?

Q7. What fundamental changes did your business organization did in its overall supply chain and procurement process to provide a seamless customer experience in this changed retailed environment?

3.6.4 Research Ethics

While undertaking the overall research, the researcher assured that proper ethics are maintained. To ensure that the study respects strong ethics, the researcher requires that all participants sign an Informed consent document before the research interview. This agreement signing ensured that the identity and privacy of each participant were safe and secure. In addition to the consent document, each applicant is presented with a plain language statement. The plain language statement outlined how the researcher will utilize the data gathered, with whom the researcher will exchange the data, and guaranteed that interviews will be conducted for research purposes and that the data from them would be discarded after a specific time.

3.6.5 Access to Data Source

The following are the different resources and tools that the researcher will utilize to access these credible participants for the interview. So, that researcher gain accurate and reliable data -

- The researcher is a member of the master program at Griffith College Dublin, giving the researcher exclusive access to a vast network of members. From whom some members have direct connections with marketing or retailing field experts. The researcher will make full utilization of this membership to get access to as many marketing or retailing field experts as possible.
- The researcher has used social media websites and applications like LinkedIn, to build a stable relationship with many marketing and retailing field professionals. The researcher will leverage this relationship to convert these professionals into reliable participants willing to share their knowledge and contribute to the development of this report.

Along with the tools mentioned above, the researcher would collect the potential participant's contact by visiting the retail store, browsing the business website on the internet, making calls to businesses helpline, and asking the experts who have already agreed to be interviewed for potential contacts

3.7 Conclusion

This section discusses the overall methodology and design of research which drives this study. It justifies the selection of Interpretive philosophy, inductive approach, interview strategy, mono-method and cross-sectional horizon together with other concepts, such as data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis tools.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Overview

A variety of semi-structured interviews with numerous grocery retailers were conducted by the researcher to gather knowledge for this study. The interview questions were split according to the labels or tags provided in the data analysis process to the research questions. These labels are shown in Figure 13, "research Questions Codes" of this section.

The researcher will review the study's findings in a tabular style. The tables compose critical themes extracted from a set of similar codes that the researcher used to retrieve the meaning of essential information from the respondent's answers to interview questions. A description and a set of quotes relevant to the themes of the table will follow each table of results. These descriptions and sets of quotes will help the researcher explain the overall results of each sub-section of this chapter in an easy-to-understand format.

Table 1 in the overview section displays the job titles of each participant alongside the interview date. For privacy purposes, the table displays the numbers assigned to each participant by the researcher, instead of the participant's name.

Table 1- Participants for the interview

| Respondents Number | Job Title | Interview Date |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Respondent 1 (R1) | Retail and distribution Director | 14/07/2020 |
| Respondent 2 (R2) | Buying Director | 31/07/2020 |
| Respondent 3 (R3) | Retail Consultant and director | 23/07/2020 |
| Respondent 4 (R4) | Store Manager | 18/07/2020 |
| Respondent 5 (R5) | Store Manager | 20/07/2020 |
| Respondent 6(R6) | Store Manager | 15/07/2020 |
| Respondent 7 (R7) | Store Manager | 22/07/2020 |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

Figure 13 Research Questions Labels

- How are Irish Omnichannel Retailers responding to emerging customer Behaviors and satisfying them? (Customer Behavior)
- What steps have present large Omnichannel Retailers taken to fulfill new customer's preferences in recent times? (Customer Preference)
- How can Irish Omnichannel Retailers maintain a loyal customer base when the concern towards health and local products are evolving among the modern-day Irish customer? (Customer Concerns)
- What fundamental changes can Omnichannel retailers make in their supply chain to provide their customers with a seamless customer experience? (Customer Experience)

Source- (Created by author of the research)

4.2 Customer Behaviour

This sub-section will address and try to find answers for the first research question of the research, which is-How are Irish Omnichannel Retailers responding to emerging customer Behaviors and satisfying them?

To discover the answer to this research issue, two interview questions were presented to the research subjects:

Q1. What changes do you observe in customer buying behavior in recent times?

Table 2- Changes in Customer Buying Behavior

| Table themes | Bigger carts, fewer rides. (3) | Customer focusing more on personal wellbeing (2) | Customer Switching products (1) | Customer Expectation (1) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Less trips, bigger Basket. (R1) | Health cautious customer(R5) | A shift towards branded products. (R3) | Increase in customer expectation (R6) |
| | Less trips, bigger Basket. (R4) | Customer shifting to plant base diet (R2) | | |
| | Less trips, bigger Basket. (R7) | | | |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

The findings of the first interview question shed light on the changing customer behavior, which is observed closely by the participating industry experts in the research interview. The table's Main themes displayed in table 2 represent the four significant behaviors exhibited by the Irish end-customers in modern times. These themes are explained below:

- Bigger Carts, fewer rides

Under this theme, respondents express that the behavior they notice in recent times is: the number of consumer trips to shop has recently dropped while the overall spending of the customer has risen.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R1) "Yeah, so through COVID, there's less shopping trips, but they buy more on the trip. So, the larger shopping baskets, less trips, bigger baskets, essentially, it's what you see in terms of shopping behavior."

- Customer focusing more on personal wellbeing

Under this concept, respondents say that end-customers have lately concentrated increasingly on their individual's wellbeing and are thus very vigilant when shopping.

Quote supporting this theme-

(R5) suggested that "Most of the customers, they are more careful about the products they what they are buying. So, loose products are not as common as before. For example, pastries, cakes, peoples are buying pre packed stuff more than before. Also fruits and vegetables. They prefer to buy pre pack one or packet one."

- Customer Switching products

According to this theme, recently, the consumer has been flipping between the goods they always purchase and the items they seldom purchase or never buy.

Quote supporting this theme-

(R3) remarked that "just more recently, within the last four months around the pandemic, all of those things have been changed very slightly in the move towards buy the label, and the move towards discounters has have paused for momentarily mainly because... consumers were told that they had to stay at home.... And as a result of

consumers shopping in Supervalu, or other convenience stores like spar and centra, then they were buying much more branded products and less private label."

- Customer expectation

This theme suggests the end-customers have begun to expect more from retailers as the future is unpredictable in terms of costs, pricing, and other concepts.

Quote supporting this theme-

This is what (R6) commented" so they'll be expecting more and more and more when it comes to the service when it comes to the availability, quality and so on, so on"

These first-interview findings set the groundwork for the next interview question. As, it is very important to know the key behavior customers are displaying. Before you know the steps, retailers have taken or are taking to respond to these behaviors.

Q2. What key steps are you taking to satisfy this change in behavior patterns?

Table 3- Steps to Satisfy Changing Customer Behavior

| Table themes | Safe Consumer Atmosphere (3) | Request and store ever more goods (1) | Data Management (2) | Changing the way to interact with customer (1) |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Providing customer, a safe environment. (R1) | ordering and stocking more product (R7) | Data gathering and preparation (R2) | Changing CRM Strategy, infrastructure, procurement system (R4) |
| | Providing customer, a safe environment. (R5) | | Data gathering and preparation. (R6) | |
| | Manage customer safety (R3) | | | |
| | Making Store more accessible (R4) | | | |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

The replies from the second question of the interview help the interviewer find the solution to the first research question of the study. Themes in table 3 demonstrate the key step participants have taken in reacting to that consumer behavior. The concepts specifically indicate that the highest number of participants has chosen Safe customer environment to deal with evolving customer purchasing behavior.

All the descriptive themes are listed below -

- Safe Consumer Atmosphere

This topic indicates that the best approach to adapt to the customer's evolving shopping behavior is to provide a secure atmosphere in which customers can easily shop.

Quote supporting this theme-

(R1) suggested that "we've just capacity to make it a safe environment for everybody in which to shop. What we've been able to do is increase capacity in our shops by putting in an automated customer counter, which makes sure that we keep the right amount of people in the shop and we've also put Perspex screens in all the relevant places around particularly in checkouts"

- Request and store ever more goods

Within this theme, the respondent suggests that having products demanded by customers accessible is the best approach to tackle the changing consumer behavior for which the respondent proposes that more products need to be purchased and stored.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R7) "Order more stock from the suppliers to make more goods available for the customer to choose from".

- Data Management

In this case, the respondent believes that collecting data, analyzing it, and then creating and implementing action steps based on the analyzed data is the right way to deal with the customer's changing behavior.

Quote supporting this theme-

"main steps that we would do. So, I think it's very much data gathering at the beginning to try and understand what categories about where

the opportunities lie, what your competitors are doing, then documenting the types of products that you'd like to bring to the market and then working very closely with our suppliers either existing ones to look at those products and maybe other NPD" (R2)

- Changing the way to interact with customer

As the name implies, the respondent indicates that to address the customer's shift in behavior, one needs to adjust the way they communicate with them, so in order to do that, they should modify technology, CRM, or Inventory management.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R4) "Yeah, obviously, there's different aspects of it, I think ... I would say in terms of the infrastructure, our CRM, then our availability and our orders and stock is probably the biggest changes."

4.3 Customer Preferences

Customer Preferences sub-section will try to find relevant answers for the study's second research question which is- What steps have present large Omnichannel Retailers taken to fulfill new customer's preferences in recent times?

In order to discover answers to the above mention research question, the following interview questions were asked to the seven participants:

Q1. What specific actions have your business taken to ensure that customer needs and preferences are satisfied in the current environment?

Table 4- Steps to Satisfy Changing Customer Preference

| Table themes | Health and security (2) | Discovering and Displaying products in demand. (2) | Retain variety of goods. (2) | Understanding customers and communicating the action step (1) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Safety and hygiene (R1) | Discovering and Displaying products in demand. (R2) | Maintain the product range(R4) | Mapping customer and communicating the issues (R3) |
| | Safety and hygiene (R5) | Discovering and Displaying products in demand. (R6) | Maintain the product range(R7) | |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

Findings on the second research question can be seen in the table above. From the table's themes (table header row), it is evident that the majority of retailers rely on one of the three trends listed below to satisfy consumer preferences.

- Health and security.
- Discovering and Displaying products in demand.
- Retain variety of goods.

All the themes from the table are explained below-

- Health and security

According to respondents supporting this theme, safety needs are at the top of the customer decision-making process, and thus catering for these needs will help respondents win customer's preferences.

Quote supporting this theme-

"we have made a lot safer by putting the Perspex screens up at all the relevant touch points and also by providing the relevant PPE to colleagues if they choose to wear them and also, we provide Sanitation units at the front of stores" is the comment given by (R1) regarding this question.

- Discovering and Displaying products in demand.

Participants categorize under this theme believe this in recent times to fulfill customer preference following steps must be undertaken. Firstly, one must be able to research and find products that the modern customer most desires, and secondly, one must be able to inform the customer that they have the desired product.

Quote supporting this theme-

"we kind of discover, which is identifying the product and looking to bring the product to market. I think once you done that you need to all to believe what are the key stakeholders to bring that across the customer." (R2)

- Retain variety of goods

Within this theme, the retailers appear to have the product range ready to satisfy the evolving preferences of the Irish Customers. The only step these retailers took is to retain its product selection.

Quote supporting this theme-

"I would say we always had that range there. It's just that it's been shopped more heavily now that those trends have changed." These are the opinions of (R4)

- Understanding customers and conveying problems

This theme reflects through the different methods and strategies commonly used by current retailers to consider existing customer

preferences and communication tools they use to communicate with front-line managers and employees the identified preferences. To become the number one choice of the customer to shop.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R3) "I think what retailers has done is they've tried to map the customer experience. So, try to put yourselves in the shoes of the customer, understand the experience that the customer is going through and try to identify all of the negative things, all the reasons why a customer may want to shop somewhere else and what their retailers are doing is introducing new systems that address these issues or maybe they are communicating around these issues."

Q2. How is your business responding to growing customer preference towards M-commerce and Online shopping?

Table 5- Steps taken to Capitalize growth of towards M-commerce and Online shopping

| Table themes | Developing new online platforms (4) | Outsourcing (3) | Investing in man-power and delivery system (2) | No change (1) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Launching own application. (R2) | partnering with external service provider. (R2) | investing in delivery system(R4) | No change(R1) |
| | Launching own application. (R3) | partnering with external service provider. (R6) | Recruiting Professionals. (R4) | Using current system. (R5) |
| | Launching own application. (R6) | partnering with external service provider. (R7) | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | investing in online platform. (R4) | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

Source- (Created by author of the research)

The principal aim behind asking this query was to learn and appreciate various measures that retailers took to react to a particular preference, namely, increasing shopper desire for online grocery.

The table in table 5 reflects the five significant measures the Irish-Omni channel retailer has taken in reaction to shopper's increasing demand for online grocery. Those measures are shown below:

- Developing new online platforms-
Participants endorsing this theme agree that the best way to leverage the rising online grocery phenomenon is to introduce their online website or application.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R2) "The second thing is we have recently just this week launched our customer loyalty app (L) plus."

- Outsourcing
According to this table header, various respondents decided to utilize and leverage external service providers' services to gain a significant lead in the M-commerce and online shopping environment.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R2) "one of them is partnering with an external provider called (B). They cater to that online shopper. So, if you want to buy groceries in with retail or with (L) you can partner with (B), or you can sign up to (B) and they will go and deliver your goods"

- Investing in man-power and delivery system

Under this group theme, respondents conclude that by extending their penetration of the online sector by hiring fresh talent and investing in delivery assets such as vans is how the retailer could capitalize on online grocery growth.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R4) "So, when COVID started, it was a massive, massive recruitment made and they also bought the physical assets and as well so they got extra vans they also rolled an online availability from more stores."

- No change

Retailer under this theme assumes that the company to which he belongs has ample technical resources to support the company conquer the uncertainty, and accelerate the trend of online grocery.

Quote supporting this theme-

In the words of (R1) "Well, well, first and foremost, it's growing rapidly. We have the capacity to grow probably as much if not more than anyone versus our competitors and not faded. We've we have the market share lead not have had for a considerable period of time."

When anyone glances at the table in Figure 5, they can see that among the five measures. Most of the companies may typically opt to build a new online portal to meet the increasing demand of Irish consumers for online groceries.

4.4 Customer Concerns

This segment of findings and discussions aims to address this study's third research question – How can Irish Omnichannel Retailers maintain a loyal customer base when the concern towards health and local products are evolving among the modern-day Irish customer?

Through looking at the study question, readers can recognize that two concepts are discussed in the research question (health concern and local items). Each concept requires an undivided focus from the researcher. So, the researcher asked the participants in this segment, two separate interview questions for this reason. these interview questions are –

Q1. Do you see health concerns growing or decreasing among your targeted audience?

How will you cater to this increasing/decreasing concern towards health among your audience?

Table 6- Health Concern

| RESPONDENT | INCREASING | DECREASING |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Respondent 1 (R1) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 2 (R2) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 3 (R3) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 4 (R4) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 5 (R5) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 6(R6) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 7 (R7) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

Table 7- Steps taken to respond to overall health concern among the customer

| | Steps to respond to increasing health concern | | | Steps to respond to decreasing health concern |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Table themes | Adding more health-related products to the catalogue (4) | Investment in delivery system (1) | Manage Product categories more closely (1) | No steps taken (1) |
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Stocking Additional health related products (R2) | Investment in delivery system (R1) | Manage Product categories more closely. (R3) | No steps taken (R6) |
| | Stocking Additional health related products (R4) | | | |
| | Stocking Additional health related products (R5) | | | |
| | Stocking Additional health related products (R7) | | | |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

Table 6 and 7 display the results on health concerns, respectively.

According to the table in figure 6, about ninety percent of the interview participants (six out of seven participants) agree that there is an increasing concern for health among end-customers. Just ten percent or (one out of seven participants) claim that health concerns are diminishing.

The table in Figure 7 indicates various actions that retailers take according to their views and perceptions to cater to health concerns. These actions are addressed in the following themes-

❖ Steps taken by the supermarket expert in consideration of the increasing health concerns in recent times are listed below:

- Adding more health-related products to the catalogue -
Within this theme, participants agree that by introducing more health-related items to their shop selves, their organization can efficiently address the increasing health concerns among the Irish consumers.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R2) "Most recent, I think there's been a huge concern on health, health and sanitation and in relation to COVID-19. So, in recent times, we've done to expose, to cater or to react to that we've looked at stocking additional products. So, whether it's additional hand sanitizers gel in larger formats or disposable and reusable masks, we have hygiene spray."

- Investment in delivery system
According to the respondent, retailers should build and strengthen a delivery network that would enable the retailer to distribute food safely and securely at the consumer's home to maintain the end-user immunity and satisfy their health concerns.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R1) "as of yesterday removed that cap as we're in a position now to fulfil more customers we've put in more vans and

upgrade our greater coverage across the across the state in the country in order to service more customers and to meet that extra demand."

- Manage Product categories more closely

According to the respondent, Ireland's retailers have to handle their product divisions more and more consistently to tackle the growing health concerns of end consumers.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R3) "I mean keep giving customers what They want....So, every year or every six months, the various aisles within the supermarket or the categories are reviewed, so that the buyers and the retailers understand what's selling more and what's selling less. So, they get more space to what's selling more, and maybe they discontinue some lines that aren't selling anymore, and they bring in new products. And what I think is that if retailers annual process this year or next year, and they might miss opportunities, I think, they have to manage their categories much more closely and much more frequently."

- ❖ Step taken by the retail specialist having a viewpoint that health concerns are declining in recent times are shown below:

- No steps taken

Under this theme, the respondent did not take any steps, as in the opinion of the participant, health concerns are declining among end customers. The theme's accompanying quotations highlight the reason why the expert feels this way.

Quote supporting this theme-

(R6) says "it's hard to say like to be honest with you now. Okay, because the fastest growing category at the moment is alcohol. So, when people drink loads of spirits twice more than before, we can't be talking about the healthy food."

Q2. To what extent do customers prefer local brands in recent times? How will you serve this local brand concerns among consumers to maintain a loyal customer base?

Answers from this interview question aid researcher in interpreting the second portion of the third study question, which focuses on consumer concerns about local products.

Table 8- Customer concern towards local brands

| RESPONDENT | Buy More | No Change | Buy Less |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Respondent 1 (R1) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 2 (R2) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 3 (R3) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 4 (R4) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 5 (R5) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 6 (R6) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respondent 7 (R7) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Source- (Created by author of the research)

Results from this interview question can be seen in table 8. The results show that all participants agreed unanimously that customer concerns regarding local markets and products have not even slightly shifted (No Change). Therefore, each company agreed not to take any new action in response to these local commodity concerns.

Quotes supporting this theme-

In the words of (R1) "I don't think any more than they've always done. I mean to (T) is the biggest buyer of Irish product in the world.... So, we've always done a fantastic job of working with local suppliers to ensure that we get them on to the shelves and into our customers baskets. So, I mean, I, we haven't in the last few weeks seen in the massive uptick in that what we have seen is more customers shopping more locally."

According to (R4) "I think (S) probably have the strongest reputation for local brands anyway, I think it's something that they've always been good at. They've never really struggled with that."

In the opinion of (R5) "Well, I think people's always preferring local brands, here in Ireland. To be honest with you, I can't really see an increase in local brands,"

4.5 Customer Experience

The sub-part of the findings and discussion chapter discusses the fourth and final research topic for this research which is- What fundamental changes can Omnichannel retailers make in their supply chain to provide their customers with a seamless customer experience?

Regarding results, only one interview question was asked of the final research question which was-

Q1 What fundamental changes did your business organization did in its overall supply chain and procurement process to provide a seamless customer experience in this changed retailed environment?

Findings of the researcher from this interview can be found in the themes of the table below-

Table 9- Steps to Give Customer a Seamless Experience

| Table themes | Recruitment and training of talent (3) | Upgrading store front (2) | Product Availability (1) | Other response (2) |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sub-Categories under the Main theme | Hiring and training talent. (R5) | Upgrading store front (R2) | Product Availability. (R3) | Halted cross-docking (R1) |
| | hiring and training talent. (R6) | Upgrading store front (R4) | | Reduce touch points (R1) |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | hiring and training talent. (R7) | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

Source- (Created by author of the research)

All the retailing experts' actions regarding customer experience are seen as table themes in table 9. Which are described below-

- Recruitment and training of talent -

The majority of the participants' experts favour hiring and developing human capital to make their supply chain and recruitment method more productive so that they may give their end-users a smooth consumer experience.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R6) "to be honest with you the only change that was done and the decision was made was to recruit more people. To be able to deliver better service...and then obviously we train them up."

- Upgrading store front -

This table theme suggests that the Participants consider and endorse the perspective that offers a smooth experience to consumers. They have to be willing to provide consumers with an atmosphere where they feel comfortable and can shop easily. For which these retailers took the step of updating their physical stores.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R2) "One of the big things that we've done that we're in the middle of doing right now is we're overhauling our entire store portfolio. So, you in every town and city across the country, you see, a lot of our (L) stores are being knocked and rebuilt, or upgraded"

- Product Availability-

In this theme, to have a seamless experience, the respondent recommends that the retailer must be willing to create a supply chain to ensure desirable goods are available on the shelves of their shop at the right time. For which according to respondent they must engage in practices like-

- Demand forecasting and management.
- Supplier relationship management.
- Manage product availability.

Quote supporting this theme-

According to (R3) "So, they need to be forecasting and communicating correctly with their suppliers. They need to be managing demand so that they don't unnecessarily create spikes in demand their suppliers can't deal with and then they need to get that product through the supply chain to the stores and then on to the shelves crucially onto the shelves and managing that that's fine detail around availability is probably the single biggest thing they can do."

- Other response-

Under this category, the respondent notes that their company has eliminated contact points across the whole supply chain and avoided cross-docking with several goods to have a streamlined experience for the final consumer.

Quote supporting this theme-

In the words of (R1) "I mean we are we deliver board product on shelf ready packaging that we've ever delivered before so that there's less touching from end to end supply chain... we've removed a lot of touch points from the supply chain by doing so ...Yes. So, we have stopped several products that we would it be cross docking through our UK distribution sites, and we've cut those out of the loop. So that they go directly into Ireland."

5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Conclusions

- Research focuses on Finding different steps that Omnichannel retailers are taking to respond to Irish customers' different behaviors, which the customer showcases while interacting with these retailers. The researcher found that the majority of experts from the seven participants suggested Bigger Carts, fewer rides, is the most significant behavioral shift among the modern-day end customers. Along with this shift, experts witnessed a few other changes like customer focusing more on personal wellbeing and Customer Switching products. The researcher also discovered that the best way to deal with the above-mentioned behavioral changes according to the majority of participants is to providing customers with a safe atmosphere to shop.
- The research finding makes it evident to the researcher that among all the participants' maximum number of professionals relies on health and security, Discovering and Displaying products in demand or Retain variety of goods in the display to meet existing customer Preferences in the modern retail era. The researcher also observed that Developing new online platforms, Outsourcing, investing in manpower, and delivery system are the three significant moves that Omnichannel retailers are taking to satisfy new and emerging preferences like online grocery shopping. According to the results, few retailers will not take any new action to accommodate these new preferences because they feel their existing structure is adequate to satisfy such preferences.
- The findings of this research look into concerns regarding an Individual's health and demand for local products, which are currently worrying the Irish end- customers. After analyzing the research findings covering customer concerns, researchers found that According to the majority of participants presently Individual's health concerns are on the rise among the consumers, whereas there is no change in concerns regarding local product demand. The researcher also found that to tackle the growing

concerns towards health maximum number of omnichannel retailers is adding health-related products to their catalogue.

- Findings regarding customer experience shines a light on the fact that in order to provide customers with seamless and friction free experience Irish Omnichannel retailers are taking steps like, recruiting and training talent, upgrading their store portfolio, making sure they have the most desired product in stock. Other steps like reducing touch points in overall supply chain and halting cross docking activities were also highlighted in the data with was obtained after thoroughly examining the interviews with the research participants.

5.2 Research Difference

The researcher found one difference between Research findings and the overall research literature. As, per the literature demand for local Irish products was going to rise in near future as more and more Irish people were planning to buy products which were belonging to local companies. But after gathering the data from interviews with industrial experts and analyzing it. The researcher found that demand for local branded products was not going up. Rather, according to the retail expert there was no change in the demand for local products among the Irish people.

5.3 Research Recommendations

- Future researches should concentrate on the framework of the interview questions that they would ask during the interview. It will help the researcher to obtain qualitative data from the research subject in the interview very quickly. By reflecting on the form of the interview question, the future researcher also makes sure that when the interviewer asks a question, the subject does not feel confused.

- Future researchers should gather more industry experts and end-customers for research interviews and qualitative data collection. That would make the results of their study more credible, which would contribute to their research work's overall creditworthiness.
- In order to perform their research on Irish Omnichannel retailers, future researchers should pick larger demography. It will allow them to learn more about omnichannel retailing and perform research closer to reality.

5.4 Research Limitations

- The research is of qualitative nature and is limited to research only grocers that are using omnichannel retailing. Also, the number of participants whom were interviewed is less which lead to collection of fewer data and creation of small statistics in relation to research objectives of this study.
- There was a limitation in the research due to the complex structure of interview questions. As some of the questions were quite complicated. They might have caused some confusion among the participants at some level.
- Technology used for video conferencing and telecommunicating created their own set of limitation for the research. For instance, there was technological breakdown (loss of internet connection) which hinder with the data collection process of this research.
- There were also external environmental factors like COVID-19 and global Lockdown that created limitation in the data gathering process, which resulted in limiting the overall scope of the study.

5.5 Research Contribution

- This research will add to the general understanding of Irish entrepreneurs who are preparing to set up their Omnichannel grocery store in the near future by providing an insight into what steps existing Omnichannel grocers are taking to create a happy and loyal consumer base.
- The study should serve as a starting point or framework for a future Irish Omnichannel Retail analysis as the research provides knowledge on the various steps taken by existing Irish omnichannel retailers of significant scale. In addition to the Irish omnichannel company's steps, the study provides detailed information on consumer behavior, Customer preference, Customer concerns, and Customer Experience.

5.6 Suggestions for future researches

- The study essentially focuses on how Irish omnichannel grocers respond to change in Customer behavior, Customer preference, Customer concerns, and Customer Experience. Further exploration needs to be conducted on how other Irish retailers using omnichannel retailing will respond to these elements' changes. One can find how will Irish fashion retailers using the omnichannel retailing technique responds to change in Customer behavior, Customer preference, Customer concerns, and Customer Experience.
- Future research could be conducted to see how Irish omnichannel grocers will react to changes in different customer elements (Like, customer satisfaction level, and Customer loyalty level).

- Further researchers should also be conducted, including the same elements (Customer behavior, Customer preference, Customer concerns, and Customer Experience) and retailers using completely different retailing models (like sellers using only online channels).

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7 Appendices

Referencing one of the interviews of participants

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Most of the customers, they are more careful about the products are they what they are buying. So, loose products are not as common as before. For example, pastries, cakes, peoples are buying pre packed stuff more than before. Also fruits and vegetables. They prefer to buy pre pack one or packet one. Also, most of the peoples are trying to do is they are shopping online. So, they got delivered to their house so they don't need to interact in the shops because of the current virus environment.

Interviewer-

And my second question is How is centra responding to this change customer behaviour?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Well, in a store as we are a small city centre store, there is different type of stores within (c) there is a high convenience stores like us who's operating in the city centre

Interviewer-

Hello sir thank you for accepting to give an interview for my research and consenting me for that. And before starting the interview, I would like you to give a certain brief background about yourself in the retailing world.

Respondent 5 (R5)-

I am (Isa) I'm the manager of (C), Charles Street I have nearly eight years' experience in retail. Three years as a senior supervisor staff and another nearly, five years as the store manager.

Interviewer-

Thank you. sir and let us start with the question bank of our interview. So, first of all, as we can see the retailing world is recently changed because of many various factors. So, and therefore the customers that usually visit the daily essential store has also changed with it. So, let us start with the customer behaviour first. Now what are the new customer behaviour that you are observing right now in this current changing environment?

and our sizes are smaller. Also, there is newer stores who's mostly in suburbs and in places where there are more people living, so more residential areas and all of us we respond in the same way to staff, staff and customers. we recommend to customers, for example to sanitise their hands when they are coming into the store, staff needs to clean the store more often than normal than normal. So, for example, the screens on the coffee machine, it's clean every half an hour. We provide gloves, plastic gloves for the customers for the coffee machine. All the pastries are packed individually in the morning after cooking. So, then customers don't need to touch the product. Selling only a few types of loose fruit everything else has to be multipack or like a bunch of bananas or something like that and also, most of the peoples are more careful about what they doing in the shop so the time they spend in the shop, they try to reduce this time. So, they basically just in and out and they normally most of the people don't want you to touch what they are buying in the store, or some more and more people are wearing face masks. And from this Monday from today, every single staff who's working in the deli or on the shop floor, will have to wear face mask.

Interviewer-

Thank you, sir. Now we have covered customer behaviour. Let us go to customer preferences as you can observe that customer and you will agree with me that customer preferences indirectly impact the customer behaviour, right?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Yes, it is.

Interviewer-

So, question regarding that is how as we can see a change in customer behaviour. So, customer preferences are also changing, and how are you going to satisfy this change to preference and need of the customer during this uncertain time?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Well, this is a hard thing to do. But we're getting a lot help from (C) head office. And basically, what we try to do is we try to give customers more options in a way that

let's say we sending most back of treats, we try to pre pack everything. So, then customers can be sure that nobody has touch their food, you know, so not like before, when the pastries and all the bakery was just displayed on the open air and basically anybody could touch it or grab it now everything is individually packed. So, we try to be as more as more professional as possible to keep the customers and our staff safe. So cleaning is like over an unimaginable level. Nothing else we can do basically.

Interviewer-

Okay, thank you sir. And we can see customers today's Irish customer preferring online shopping more and mobile commerce. So, what are the steps that centra is taking into capture this opportunity of mobile commerce and online shopping?

Well, as I said, big stores they more interacting with home deliveries and especially (s), they deliver in home, they do the online or online shopping also there is an app, there's a (c) app where you can order your stuff and then we make it ready for you to pick it up from the shop. So basically, you don't need to stand in the queue ranting because it's already paid and already order, then you just need to come and collect it. We can do that as well. Also, we try to encourage for example, the builders. If there is a larger group of them to send only one person into the store, or over phone, tell us their order. We try to prepare it in time. And then one person just needs to come in, pick it up and take it so it's basically we try to reduce the time, the amount of people in the store and recently as more and more people want to do online shopping because they don't want to interact in the shop.

Interviewer-

Thank you, sir. Now, let us go ahead to our next segment, which is known as customer concerns as you are already told t by all means, I can assume that the customer that entered the store and interacts they are becoming more and more health conscious So, you are definitely seeing an increase in the health and safety segment of the customer, right?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Yes, it is. And also, I have to say that is more and more people try to eat healthy in the last, let's say one and a half year already. But since the COVID-19 started and since the lockdown and everything what we can see is more peoples are spending more money on healthy, healthy foods. So, salads, vegetables, fruits, also, any kind of food supplement food supplies. What is like an extra to their health Yeah.

Interviewer-

what steps (c) is taking to make sure that these concerns are meet?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Well we all the time try to be up to date with our products and with our products offering. So, we have different options. We have options for vegan customers for example, we have a whole range of salads, which only preparing in store and they are way much more healthy than Let say, chicken cholesterol with cheese and I don't know something else. But yeah, we try to giving customers more options and more healthy options. Also, in confectionery as well, you can see a big increase in a way that the healthy buyers and healthy snacks are becoming more and more popular and more widespread across all the stores.

Interviewer-

Thank you, sir. And the second concern that we can see as most economical reopening. So custom here government are pushing towards customers preferring local brands and local products. So, have you seen, in your opinion on are customer buying, preferring more local brands over global brands? Or is it the same?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Well, I think people's always preferring local brands, here in Ireland. To be honest with you, I can't really see an increase in local brands, as the demand for all type of products in the last two, three months is a really, really big challenge for all of the supply chains and all sorts of stores as well. With orders and receiving orders, it is a really, really challenging time for everybody.

Interviewer-

Okay, and now, let us go to the last segment, which is known as customer experience. So, as customer experience has become a greater part in the retail world like customer want to be experience the same kind of luxury that they have over online platform that they feel in the physical platform. So, what are the steps that (c) is taking to make sure that customer has a seamless customer experience?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Well, I have to say (C). (M) so basically (c), (S) we always focus on customer experience on customer service. So, I think five years ago, there was a programme (M) started and it says it's called the I-care training. So, I-care training makes a difference between customer service basics and customer service excellence. And our goal is that every single staff who's working in the store, they are going to deliver an excellent customer service because all the resources and all of the big customer surveys, they clearly show that to keep and retain a regular customer is more hard. Sorry, it's a it's more easy than gain a new regular customer. Also, because of social media platforms because of people's are still talking with each other colleagues, friends, family members, that experience spread very, very quickly and it can destroy brand reputation also the business reputation it can it can lead to losing jobs, it can lead to losing business, if you lose in business we cannot to provide enough hours for our staff. So, then they are going to earn less money. So, it is the most important part of every single retail business that you need to give the customers the best customer service that you can provide. So, it's started from very, very basic things greeting the customer offering bags for them, packing the bags for them. Or if somebody asked you that they are looking for a product and they cannot find on the shelf you're not pointing with your finger you bring them over to the product and then you ask if you can may have in any other way and these are small things for the people to realise and shoot to do and we are in the (c) we are actually try our best in pushing our staff towards this way and in my opinion as well, it's very, very important. When as a customer, you enter a store, first impression. If the store is clean, you have to go there, if it's dirty, you probably not going to return. Again. If you have a bad customer service experience, you probably won't go there. If you have a really bad experience like an argument or staff is rude to you, you're probably going to Tell to your friends, your family members that look I was in

that store and you know this and this happened and I don't think it's good or it's nice or whatever, and probably won't return. Probably, they won't go that neither. So that's why it's really important to look after our customers to retain regular customers and try to gain more and more regular customers but it is way much more harder. than it sounds like.

Interviewer-

So, you are telling you have in your supply chain you are ready to train your employees move, right?

Respondent 5 (R5)-

Yes, we have a we have a training programme which every new staff member needs to go through and it's called I-care. So, basically is give you different kind of views on service basics and service excellence. And our goal is to have a service excellence. So, how they measure it is we have a mystery shopper coming to the store a couple of times a year and they give feedback a report on how do they feel when they come to the store where they have certain criteria's where they need to check. So, it starts from let's say, uniforms, uniform standards. Is the staff member have his or her name badge is a staff members look tidy and clean is the shop floor look clean tidy is the Beans overflowing Is there any rubbish around, the shop is well stocked and some stuff like that.

Interviewer-

Thank you, sir. Thank you for interview and your time. Thank you